

NEWS RELEASE

Task Force Hope

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Mississippi Recovery Field Office Rear
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MISSISSIPPI RFO MEDIA UPDATE

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Rambling Rita Not Slowing Mississippi Recovery

BILOXI, MISS ... “We’ve got an eye on Rita, but we are fully executing today.”

Jimmy Waddle is deputy commander for the Army Corps of Engineers Mississippi Recovery Field Office, national force here charged with debris removal, Operation Blue Roof, and a host of other FEMA missions crucial to Katrina recovery.

Dry weather has helped the Recovery Field Office based at Kessler Air Force Base move ahead of projections in Operation Blue Roof and meet schedules in an enormous, very complicated debris removal mission.

The Corps’ recovery forces in Mississippi are prepared to move well north should evacuation become necessary, but all focus today is on keeping all missions moving forward and keeping workers safe despite record heat.

“Many workers are from states not accustomed to this Mississippi heat and humidity,” Waddle said.

The Army Corps of Engineers’ Task Force Hope Mississippi has 708 personnel from around the nation focused on recovery operations in the Mississippi Recovery Field Office (RFO). This number could eventually reach 1000 at peak recovery as the Vicksburg District sets up a district-size team to execute assigned FEMA missions.

FEMA estimates that there are currently about 20 million cubic yards of debris in the hurricane impacted area of Mississippi. This equates to 200 football fields piled 50 feet high.

The Corps mission for now involves removing 5.8 million cubic yards. At this level, it would take about 8 months to remove it from the streets, and roughly a year and a half to completely dispose of it. The debris mission could increase as more counties come on line and FEMA offers additional assistance programs.

The Corps has been assigned 14 south Mississippi counties and is currently moving debris at a clip that would fill 2 football fields 50 feet high daily.

About 16,000 requests for Operation Blue Roof have been received in the past 12-14 days. Over 5,500 roofs have already been installed. More than 225 crews are now working, installing between 700-800 roofs per day.

Estimates are that 23,000 roof will have been repaired when the mission is accomplished in the next 30-40 days. This mission will require an estimated 2 square miles of placed plastic roofing.

About two dozen Operation Blue Roof Sign Up Centers are now open in the impacted counties. Self-help tarps are also on order to restock local county EOC supplies.

The Corps has also received a FEMA assignment to replace hundreds of Mississippi police stations, fire stations, city halls, post offices, government buildings and temporary classrooms on school property. The first building is scheduled to be installed this week for a fire department in Hancock County.

The Corps has also awarded a contract for 400 classrooms over the next few weeks to get schools back on line.